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ABSTRACT

Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., is a retired three-star general in the United States Army and former president and chief executive officer of the Center for Creative Leadership. This book is a compilation of columns that he wrote during 1990-94 for the Center's periodical "Issues and Observations." The articles emphasize learning as the essential connection between theory and practice. The book begins with an adaptation of an essay written for the Kellogg Leadership Studies Program, called "Learning and Relearning." Other articles include the following: (1) "The Pitfall of Instant Gratification"; (2) "A Few 'Truths'"; (3) "A Shadow Definition"; (4) "Bad Lessons"; (5) "An Issue and an Observation"; (6) "Assessment"; (7) "Questions of Change"; (8) "Comparing Military and Business Leaders"; (9) The Need to Build, as Well as Operate, Organizations"; (10) "More Learning"; (11) "Lessons from the Battlefield"; and (12) "Good and Bad Questions." (LMI)

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Walter F. Ulmer, Jr.

INSIDE VIEW

A LEADER'S OBSERVATIONS ON LEADERSHIP

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Walter F. Ulmer, Jr.

Center for Creative Leadership
Greensboro, North Carolina

The Center for Creative Leadership is an international, nonprofit educational institution founded in 1970 to foster leadership and effective management for the good of society overall. As a part of this mission, it publishes books and reports that aim to contribute to a general process of inquiry and understanding in which ideas related to leadership are raised, exchanged, and evaluated. The ideas presented in its publications are those of the author or authors.

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Foreword

It is not often that one encounters a leader who is eminently practical and yet deeply thoughtful. Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., with whom I worked during his tenure as president and CEO of the Center for Creative Leadership, is one such person.

He has devoted much of his life to thinking about and practicing leadership: thirty-seven years in the U.S. Army—in combat theaters in Korea and Vietnam, on the faculties of the Army War College and the U.S. Military Academy (where he was also Commandant of Cadets), and as head of the Army's human-resources-development group in the Pentagon; nine years with CCL; and now two years working, in a consultant's role, with various commercial and governmental organizations.

His practical work has been recognized in many ways. He retired from the Army as a three-star general, having received military decorations from the Republics of Korea and Vietnam, from the Federal Republic of Germany, and, of course, from the United States. He has been named an Alumni Fellow of Penn State University and a Distinguished Fellow of the Army War College. And in 1995 CCL initiated in his honor the Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., Applied Research Award, given annually for especially notable field work on leadership.

The present collection is meant to recognize, and share, his thought work. We have selected a number of his essays that were written between 1990 and 1994 as contributions to "Inside View," the president's column in CCL's quarterly publication *Issues & Observations*, and we have added to this a lead-off piece adapted from a paper that was written last year for a leadership studies project sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. A wide range of topics is thus covered, but I think you will find that the essays are unified by his emphasis on the essential connection between theory and practice: learning.

Walt is an active and continuous learner, and this is why he is such an effective leader and teacher. Upon reading this collection, I think you will agree with me.

Walter W. Tornow
Vice President, Research and Publication
Center for Creative Leadership

Learning and Relearning

Warren Bennis once remarked that his early training at Fort Benning, Georgia, in Officer Candidate School, followed a couple years later by command of an Infantry Company on the battlefield in Europe, constituted his greatest learning experience. From June 1952 through June 1985 my service as an Army officer provided almost continuous opportunities to observe, practice, and learn about leadership.

In December 1953, returning to Japan at the end of the Korean War, I took command of my first unit. It was an Amphibious Tractor Company of 200 soldiers equipped with 53 armored vehicles designed to carry assault troops from ship to shore. Later I had opportunities to delve into leadership research while on the faculty of the Army War College and as Commandant of Cadets at West Point. So the leap from the military to the civilian halls of the Center for Creative Leadership as its president and CEO in July 1985 was really not as dramatic as one might imagine. At that time CCL had a full-time staff of about 120. I had just previously commanded an Army Corps with a total active and reserve complement of about 120,000. It soon became apparent that complex organizations, regardless of size of budgets or staff, demand the same kind of energy from the leader.

Challenge

Leading in an academic environment, be it West Point, CCL, the Army War College, or Penn State, is extraordinarily challenging. (In my mind the only position with demands similar to those of college dean or department chair is that of school-system superintendent.) My last ten years' experience has confirmed for me something that I sensed as an undergraduate and then increasingly understood as I served as an instructor and assistant professor (teaching mapping, physical geography, and astronautics), directed the student research program at the Army War College, and finally took part in efforts to "educate" educators: We have no viable model for leading in organizations comprised primarily of intellectuals; no one has articulated what the balance of structure and latitude in such institutions should be. Academic and other high-information environments are probably nearer to true leadership situations than are the more studied positions within traditionally structured entities. The challenge of leading in structures that are somewhat fluid, where competence and credentials compete for status with hierarchical position and where outcomes evade prompt measurement, is a fertile ground for future research.

Leading soldiers in battle is in general a less demanding task than leading a group of faculty members through a curriculum change—if you assume that the soldiers are well trained, that their perception of the central task is clear, and that the leader has gained their trust. If so, a leader's request for even superhuman effort will be respected. If the parameters of the situation are unclear, the soldiers will look to the leader for advice on how to bring a clearer focus. This is not to say that leading in combat is simple, or that nuances of personality and context are absent in that special environment. Leader mistakes do get people killed. Yet, relatively speaking, a well-trained military leader among well-trained men has a better chance of success than a department chair.

The valid assessment of outcomes, however, depends in greater part than I had imagined in earlier years on the operable definition of "success." Many of our organizational problems—the treachery of stifling climates, the inadequacy of our personal development techniques, and the Byzantine systems for assessing productivity in particular—derive from our inability to agree on what an individual or an organizational group must do to be successful. (I'll have more to say on this below.)

Defining Leadership

A couple decades ago it seemed to me that neat and universal definitions of leadership and management would really help the practice of both. Now I am quite sure that would not be the case. Seeking *the* perfect definition of those terms is just not worth the effort. However, clarification of terminology might allow discussions of leadership to become more productive. The leader-versus-manager dialogue in particular provides more heat than light. The two processes are entwined and interdependent. We probably need a new word describing the creative, humane use of influence and authority to focus group energy on the tasks at hand. If trust is a key ingredient in a leader being a leader, which it is; and if competence in making essential decisions is an element in trust-building, which it is; and if many decisions involve resource allocations quite independent of their motivational impact, which they do; then leadership and management are fortuitously or hopelessly melded.

The military has held some small advantage in this discussion, although increasingly the leadership semantics in the military world are those of the academic and corporate worlds as well. It is probably true that leadership is more highly prized in the military than elsewhere. The disadvantage of the military environment as a catalyst for *good* leadership is that the necessity for traditional control of tactical units in battle—something that is both alive yet obsolete in the face of need for initiative at all levels on the modern battle-

field—can justify untimely use of authoritarian styles. The "too much management and not enough leadership" school is often naive about what makes an organization tick in peace or in war.

Strength and Weakness

When I studied leaders and leadership as an undergraduate at West Point, the stories were mostly of success. Yet each battle had a loser as well as a winner, and the American Civil War clearly exposed character flaws of key leaders as major factors in the tactical equation. But for some reason I still had the notion that the word *leader* did not quite fit with the words *strength* and *weakness—weakness* in particular. It was more than an absence of strength that increasingly captured my attention; it was the presence of some downright bad habits. It now seems so simple: Great leaders have never been totally great, and one may succeed even with significant imperfections! Many historical notables floundered in Churchillian ways when young but somehow neutralized their weaknesses later in life. In the cases of Churchill, MacArthur, and both Roosevelts, their weaknesses were simply overwhelmed by the enormous strength of other parts of their character. Napoleon's self-delusion and unconstrained ego (exacerbated by physical ailments), trivial in context for two decades prior, finally caught up with him at Waterloo. Napoleon in 1815 was a classic case of lack of self-awareness. When I was younger, I was among the many who believed, consciously or subconsciously, that introspection had little merit. It might have been normal for Plato or Goethe or even Adlai Stevenson, but it had nothing to offer us leaders. In fact, it might set the stage for idle contemplation when the moment called for action. Nero might have been thinking too deeply when Rome was in trouble. However, all of that aside, there is no doubt that self-awareness is crucial for leadership development. Still, introspection seems counter-intuitive for most people who move to the top of hierarchical organizations. Tolstoy had it about right: "Everybody wants to change the world, but nobody wants to change himself." I hope we are making progress toward the respectability of self-awareness as essential to the process of adult growth.

The Typology of Leaders

Exploring the literature on the behavioral aspects of leadership—in contrast with the historical or political literature that considers leadership mostly in terms of outcomes—I of course encountered discussions on whether there are essential traits or common behaviors that all leaders share, on the necessity and ability of leaders to adjust to different situations, and on the categorizations of psychological types. I have found it useful to be able to

generalize about certain predilections of personality, informative to measure skills and aptitudes, and often revealing to employ instruments that identify leader behaviors from multiple viewpoints.

When I became president of CCL I was enrolled in two of its most famous leadership-development programs, as are all new members of the teaching and senior research staff. One of the instruments that at first appeared to me odd, if not frivolous, was the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory. It highlights different approaches to problem solving, comparing at ends of the scale the "adaptive" style with the "innovative" style. (Kirton could have used more neutral descriptors. He and I disagree on that—an item for discussion at some other time.) I scored a couple standard deviations toward the "innovative" end of the scale—as every red-blooded American wants to these days. In the analysis of styles, there was a fascinating comparison between the perceptions of people at one end of the scale about those at the other ("wrong!") end. (Much of the work in compiling actual views of people scoring in outlying regions of the scale was done at CCL by Stan Gryskiewicz and his colleagues.) Immediately I saw the source of an earlier difficulty in communicating with one four-star general when I was a three-star general. I viewed him as a rigid bureaucrat. He saw me as a loose cannon. Had I, even better we, had an awareness of the likely outcomes of the contrasts in this aspect of our personalities, we might have ameliorated the mutual discomfort. I should have noted earlier in my life that Clausewitz and other military commentators such as Major General Hugh Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven saw merit in categorizing leader personalities. They acknowledged the limitations that nature imposes on our makeup, while recognizing that life experience can add or detract significantly from what genetics and chance have conspired to create. There is no doubt that analysis of leader personality has utilitarian value. Knowledge of the existence and capacities of reliable psychometric instruments has been a valuable part of my expanded horizon over the past fifteen years. My schooling is more complete on the behavioral than the cognitive side. I am, however, quite convinced that measuring that powerful but elusive factor we call intelligence requires more than the traditional measures of IQ. It demands measures of other facets that we have come to explore recently as "tacit knowledge" and "emotional intelligence." There is an intriguing correlation between measurable intelligence and promotion to higher levels in the corporate and military worlds. I reject the contention that high intelligence is ever by itself an impediment to leader effectiveness, other things being equal. (Those "other things" are emotional stability, physical fitness, technical competence, and the like.) I

remain thankful that during the most difficult times in military operations I was accompanied by some very bright people.

The Universality of Effective Leadership Behaviors

Years ago I gave little thought to whether "good leadership" differed among cultures or organizations. Then I became very comfortable with two themes with which I am no longer enamored. The first is that every different culture and personality requires a unique brand of leadership. The second is that there are innumerable significant cultural factors to be considered when leading. My universe of observations is limited. I have watched groups of a few individuals and units with many thousands. Some were Korean and Vietnamese soldiers under stress. Some were civilian leaders at their workplace in several parts of the world. Certainly local customs and deeply ingrained cultures make a difference, but a few fundamental things remain. Leaders, even in authoritarian cultures, need to establish trust. Trust seems universally to require demonstrated competence in the essential decision-making aspects of the activity. Clarity of vision, expressed in locally meaningful terminology, is also a universal component of productive leadership. The third behavior that is essential is a posture of integrity and depth of commitment. This is sometimes portrayed by setting the example or sharing danger or "being a heat shield." One of the major problems of the Vietnamese Army, which was comprised of many brave soldiers as well as some poor leaders, was that there was no policy of personnel rotation between front and rear. The same leaders who were out in the jungle when I was first there in 1963 were still there—if alive—when I returned in 1972. This was also, by the way, the major policy defect of our own military during that era: We attempted to share the load and equitably divide exposure to combat. As a result, we had continuous personnel turbulence in units to the extent that it inhibited the establishment of trust so essential to cohesion. The real miracle was that most units operated effectively in spite of the one-year rotation policy. This example is replicated in some organizations: job rotation for developmental purposes being overdone in a misguided attempt to be "fair" to all concerned. In the long run, "all concerned" suffer because the organization is optimizing for equity and neglects steps to ensure productivity and even viability. This conceptual mistake is similar to the lesson I have never really learned: There comes a time to fire or replace an individual for severe incompetence. Waiting and coaching and hoping for improvement may be generous of heart but is often dysfunctional.

The long-suffering and somewhat jaded soldiers in Vietnamese infantry units in 1973 were either reasonably aggressive and energetic or routinely

apathetic and ineffective, very much like they were in 1963. The difference each time was in local leadership. Effective leaders in that Vietnamese Army showed the same behaviors as did effective leaders in ours: a discernible commitment beyond themselves that engendered commitment from below; a competence in daily tactical tasks that led to routine trust; and, even if aloof, a willingness to lead by example. Although this universality might be because leadership within militaries around the globe has certain commonalities, I attribute it primarily to the evolution of a cluster of leader behaviors that have proved effective over time. After watching military leaders at work for thirty-seven years, and then being closely associated with leadership in the civilian sector for more than a decade, I have no doubt that effective techniques in these different sectors are more alike than different. Good leaders in our Army look very much like good leaders elsewhere.

Genetics

There is something un-American about acknowledging bloodlines. The very idea that some were "born to the purple" always appalled me. It still does, although a powerful acknowledgment from my past two decades is the prominent role of genetics in performing leadership roles. Birth circumstances and the environment of the first six or eight years so incontrovertibly mold the framework of our being that those of us dedicated to leadership development and training need be very modest. Maybe I can pass off responsibility for some of my failures to modify the behavior patterns of some people who have worked for me. In the 1950s I was quite sure that I could greatly influence the attitudes, behaviors, and maybe even the deepest part of an individual's being. I, and others, thought leaders could be created from most any clay by example and coaching and sheer logic. That was naive but not totally unproductive. We helped a lot of people grow and expand to the limits of their innate capacity. The Army still does that about as well as any institution. People rarely fully exploit their natural abilities. The fact that natural abilities are different in some dimensions is not debatable. Still, it is individual aptitude and passion that counts. Within all different groups of humans there are born leaders. They require very little practical experience to get up to speed. When they get to be CEOs or generals or bishops they somehow recall vividly how it is on the plant floor or in the infantry platoon or at the pulpit. Their powerful sorting mechanisms permit them to uncover the core issues. For them, formal education was merely a time for reflection and triggering of latent interests. (VMI did little for George Marshall, West Point little for Douglas MacArthur, and Harvard little for Teddy Roosevelt.) There are within groups of whatever background or ethnicity high numbers of

those whose natural talents are sufficient to permit developing into all but the most charismatic and brilliant of leaders—the hundreds within organizations that get the work done each day, not infrequently inspiring others in the process. Yet it is difficult for a collection of solid but average citizens to craft an institutional vision. Those who believe that leadership is not required in the visioning process have not spent enough time in leaderless group exercises or in "egalitarian" academic environments.

The New Paradigm

My efforts in both military and civilian settings to let the vision of the organization seep up from the bottom have failed. In fact, I believe that certain leadership functions simply cannot be done efficiently—if at all—in large group processes. Parts of the academic and business worlds are searching for a "new paradigm of leadership." Nobody seems to have defined this in operational terms. The case can be made that *new paradigm* is code for a leaderless organization that prizes laissez-faire and optimizes individualism to the detriment of the team. The time may come when humanity has evolved to the point where a basic structure and principal focus is irrelevant, but we have not yet arrived. Humans want to be a part of some larger coalescence of individuals joined by common values. I take issue with the fashionable thesis that future employment will be transitory. My guess is that people will seek a work environment that provides both respect for their individualism *and* a sense of their being a part of a reliably comfortable structure. So to provide that, and to best ensure long-term productivity, most companies will offer long-term employment, albeit in new forms. That said, the resounding good news is that autocratic, rigid bureaucracies are increasingly suspect. Commitment, and not control, is the concept flooding into the darkest corners of organizational tradition as the only insurance for *sustained* productivity.

Failure to Utilize Relevant Research

Had I not been fortunate enough to join the Center for Creative Leadership (It is better to be lucky than smart!), I would most likely be among the larger crowd who remain unaware of the solid work accomplished in the area of leadership research since the late 1940s. (I will be forever indebted to David DeVries and Kenneth Clark for their coaching as I transitioned into the behavioral science world of CCL.)

Unfortunately, much good work sits on dusty shelves or emerges only in discussions at conferences of the Academy of Management or the American Psychological Association. This unawareness may be lessened by the impact of such periodicals as the *Leadership Quarterly*, and in such nontech-

nical publications as *Issues & Observations* published by the Center for Creative Leadership, along with some excellent reports from the Conference Board. Yet the story is still not escaping from the halls of academia. Here is a short list of my favorite findings from recent research:

- Both transactional and transformational leadership styles are relevant; "transformational" is the real key; and the practice of both can be improved through focused training or education;
- Genetics influence leadership style, and personality often overrides the situation or the capabilities of followers in determining a leader's behavior;
- Self-awareness is essential for efficient adult growth and development;
- Organizational climate can be analyzed and appropriately manipulated to enhance productivity;
- The expectations of other people, particularly *significant* other people, can greatly affect our behavior; and
- Trust is essential to sustained leader effectiveness, and its generation can be enhanced or destroyed by specific leader behaviors and by managerial competencies.

With this research in mind, here is my list of leader characteristics that contribute to trust of a leader by followers: competent in critical skills; fair and rational; committed to organizational values; willing to share risks; keeps promises; trusting of others; open and direct; predictable and consistent; discrete with sensitive information; and responsive to feedback. The list has been refined through discussions with participants in training programs at CCL, by personal observation, and by discourse over the years with some of my military colleagues who have spent a lot of time thinking about these things. In any case, although we are underutilizing available solid research, there is much greater cross-fertilization between theoreticians and practitioners now than twenty years ago. Global competition in the marketplace has been the prime catalyst.

The Criterion Issue

Most research on leader effectiveness is flawed. The problem is the lingering ambiguity of the criterion for leadership success. My experience in organizations military, governmental, academic, and corporate is that the best leaders are not always the individuals promoted to positions of high responsibility. This is not news. Many of the best colonels I saw in the military were not promoted to general, although many of those promoted to general were among the best of the colonels. All of us have stories of how the second- or

third-best candidate for promotion got the job. Surely the person making the promotion decision did not say, "I think I'll bypass the most productive, promising manager and promote somebody who is not as good." I have never known anybody who thought that way, even when cronyism was factored in. So the crux of the matter is the criterion problem. The whole mess is made worse when we consider that most studies of managerial success are based on the premise that the top people who are being studied as examples are in fact the best leaders or at least the best managers. The most accurate judges of the leader—in the leadership role—are the people who are led by him or her. Trustworthiness, integrity, compassion, and commitment are seen unadorned only from the vantage point of the follower. The chairman of the board or the commander in chief or the plant manager might know best who is accomplishing the immediate results in the most impressive manner. But superiors rarely have access to the full picture. Their views are notably skewed toward highly visible outcomes, with "means" usually taking a back seat to "ends." Our focus on high-profile, short-term results combined with performance-appraisal systems whose inputs reside exclusively in the hands of the boss will inevitably lead to the promotion of significant numbers of nonleaders to top positions.

I first experimented with subordinates giving me written, anonymous feedback in 1968. I had just completed a tour as commander of the Cavalry Squadron of the 82d Airborne Division. I composed a simple ten-question list about what I thought were important behaviors and gave my troop commanders and key staff a Likert scale of choices. This was done after I had written the efficiency reports and been given the farewell dinner. In the automobile driving away from Fort Bragg, as I moved on to another base, I read the fifteen anonymous questionnaires and learned a little something—most importantly that the upward feedback process is doable, even in a traditionally conservative setting.

Ethics

Cheating in schools and colleges has increased dramatically in the last fifteen years. In some circles, shoplifting has become an after-school amusement. Crime has shaken our world. A healthy societal skepticism typifying America has degenerated too commonly into a paralyzing national cynicism. Yet much unethical behavior in organizations that ultimately corrodes the entire social fabric stems from two preventable sources. The first is that many senior leaders do not set the example by their personal behavior. They do not "walk their talk"—a phrase that I find unappealing but utilitarian. By these misbehaviors they construct a rationalization for everyone else to cut corners.

Stories of the disconnect between credos and actions fill the pages of both popular and academic publications.

The second may be even more far-reaching as a stimulus for unethical behavior: an inadequacy of managerial expertise that creates ethical dilemmas for the workforce. It can be observed in military, commercial, academic, and community service organizations. At its core it is inattention to the reality that systems for measuring individual and organizational productivity drive behavior. In its worst form it is gross incompetence exemplified by unawareness on the part of senior leaders of the impact of their policies and procedures on the various levels of the organization. In the less flagrant form of inadequacy it is an unreasonable demand for quarterly profits or spectacular innovations that carelessly twists and bends the scruples of subordinate managers. Someone has remarked about "sinful structures created by well-intentioned but inadequate leaders." Most of the unethical behavior that I have seen in organizations was born of managerial stupidity. Although dishonest behavior cannot be excused, the perpetrator of the larger crime of gross managerial neglect remains too often unidentified and unpunished.

The Magic of Organizational Climate

My friend and best coach, Colonel Mike Malone (recently departed from this world a whole lot earlier than he should have), first started talking to me about looking at climates from a systematic viewpoint in the late 1970s. I was then commanding an armored division of about 17,000 soldiers in Germany. (They were a hard-working crew, spending long hours in the field away from their families and the comforts of a dry bunk. Their dedication and competence helped bring the Cold War to a proper end.) Anyone who has watched organizations recognizes that some combination of stimuli from the immediate environment makes work either a joy or a burden or something in between. Then and now I have no hesitation in picking the ultimate winner in a contest between a brilliant leader and a stultifying climate.

In working on a study of the professional climate of the U.S. Army at the end of the Vietnam War, Mike and I and some other researchers had focused on leader behaviors directly, without much heed for the particulars of the organizational climates. That made sense for that study but did not make sense for deeper analysis of differences between highly effective and mediocre units. With some academic help and some research done much earlier by the Army Research Institute and Rensis Likert and a few other folks, we came to grips with the realities of organizational climates. A lot of us worked on it in an Army Corps and the results were good. All of the measurable operational rates were improved—from aircraft accident rates to target hits. The

installation on which the corps headquarters was located was designated "best managed" among its peers in the continental United States. There were some laudatory reviews in military periodicals, a story in *Newsweek*, and a couple lines in *A Passion for Excellence* (by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin; Random House, 1985). A consulting organization studied the climate and found it notably above average. Some Army schools used that study as an example of deliberate change in a large system. Later on we reviewed what had been done over a period of several years and deduced a few principles—ten to be exact.[1] They essentially defined the actions of a "transformational" excursion. Extracted mostly from military experience, their recognized relevance to the corporate world argues strongly that the essentials of productive leadership of complex organizations are transferable between public and private sectors.

Climates must be measured before they can be dissected and improved or transformed. Any organization larger than ten people that does not routinely employ climate-assessment techniques is missing the boat. Skills of assessing and interpreting climate data can be taught but usually are not. Neither the assessment of people nor of organizations is included in most executive-development programs or business school curricula. Just as I am sure of the need to systematically take the pulse of an organization's climate, I am also sure that an "empowering" environment is essential for sustained productivity. Rather amazingly, but not surprisingly upon reflection, some individuals in the chain of management or command do not want to be empowered. They do not want to make choices routinely on larger issues. Learned, conditioned avoidance of responsibility in hierarchical organizations is an unfortunate reality. It is also a reality in many nonhierarchical organizations! The one unending pull within organizations, measurable within climates, is between discipline and creativity. The constructive amelioration of this inherent stress is the primary role of senior leaders.

When less chronologically gifted than today, I thought I was smart enough to create the climate that would satisfy all interested parties. I learned

[1] Our first principle was to "get in touch with what is really going on in the organization." That remains my initial point of discussion in any exchange with senior executives concerned about coping with change and miscellaneous company malaise. Other principles included the need to clarify goals, standards, and priorities and assess their compatibility with espoused organizational values; the need for leaders to set the example in representing organizational values; and the need for systems for analyzing, reporting, and rewarding individual and team effectiveness. Mike and I were also very high on eliminating unproductive competition and on assuming good intent when something goes amiss—searching for systemic flaws instead of hunting for individual culprits. And we talked of the creative use of organizational "climate" as a key tool of top leaders.

I could not, just as I could not help everybody become a good leader. So the message here is that certain organizational challenges are lingering and require constant, visible attention—like crabgrass. It is easier to respond spectacularly to crises than to sustain excellence and support teamwork over the long haul. There is at times the urge to give up and resort to legal and autocratic techniques that are conveniently available. But leaders need faith in themselves and in their belief that things can get better through keeping to the higher road. A kind of altruistic self-confidence may be the single best gift. Is that, by the way, inherited or just assimilated in early childhood? Or all of the above?

The Pitfall of Instant Gratification

A discernible social trend of the last fifty years in America—and probably in most parts of the industrialized world—has been the change in time horizons. Our incremental measures of time have moved from seasons to microseconds. The trip that took George Washington days by wheeled coach from New York to Philadelphia is now hardly a trip. James Madison is said to have remarked that he hadn't heard from his ambassador to Spain in over two years, and if he didn't hear from him within the next six months he, the President, would surely contact him to find out what was going on.

The need for relatively instant gratification is a shortcoming of our society. We may no longer have the will to set the cornerstone of a cathedral whose completion we will not live to see. The negative aspects of television have not only enhanced our tolerance for violence, poor sportsmanship, and incomplete sentences but also encouraged us to bundle human activities into neat thirty-minute chunks. That medium also contributes to our children's need for continual stimulation. Their hostility toward self-generated amusement through books and, for some, entertaining themselves through informal, disorganized athletics is another drawback of passive viewing. We also introduce competition against peers (instead of competition against standards) in kindergarten or first grade, and I suspect that one of the many dysfunctional behaviors stimulated by inappropriate competition is a general acceleration in the pace of our lives. Getting things done quickly often wins the race.

So none of us should be surprised at the search for quick solutions to the major, enduring challenges of organizational leadership or creativity. There are task forces at this very moment whose charter is to find a fix for leadership problems in short order. I know of two or three recently chartered groups—spanning both business and the government—whose mission is to search for and discover the timeless leadership truths and put them into practice immediately: sudden individual behavior change, followed by a few weeks of team-building, leading to an enhanced organizational climate, culminating in a major cultural renaissance.

The good news is that more executives are concerned about developing leaders and upgrading the organizational climate as the path to improved productivity. The bad news is that there is no quick and easy fix to leadership deficiencies. At the Center we believe that a few days of work (featuring highly participative workshops and individual feedback) can set the stage for remarkable change in style and self-awareness; and we also believe that even large, complex organizations can be led through a visible change of culture.

But neither individual growth nor institutional modification is simple, quick, painless, or risk-free. Further, empowerment and participation of subordinates as routes to high-quality productivity require more, not less, managerial energy than the more traditional authoritarian formulas.

The tough reality is that the careful crafting and perennial stamina necessary for development of more effective organizations runs counter to our appetite for instant gratification. Perhaps we should emphasize that fact even more than we do!

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A Few "Truths"

It is easy to mistake the solidifying of biases for kernels of wisdom. In any case, after twenty or thirty years of working in some particular field there are "truths" that take shape in one's mind. Here are some of mine regarding leadership:

We do a poor job in defining "successful leaders." It is possible to be the head of an organization that is doing very well and still be an untrusting despot. Some who have made it to the top of the ladder are "successful" only in the narrowest sense of the word.

Great charisma alone is not enough. Individuals in senior positions in organizations need to do more than motivate, envision, and exemplify behaviors. They also need the skills we associate with classical "management." If you don't know the business and don't understand the dynamics of organizations, wonderful vision and fine sensitivities to human aspirations won't suffice for long.

The majority of ethical malfunctions stem more from the managerial shortcomings of executives than from the human proclivity to cheat. If, for example, we develop unattainable production quotas and then punish those who don't meet the standard, something is going to give.

There are more intolerable subordinates than there are intolerable bosses. But that fact is irrelevant. The boss has to take the blame for friction, and the boss must accept responsibility for a poor climate. But the boss also has no excuse for tolerating forever behaviors that erode the morale of the overall organization. Modern bosses in large organizations are more often too slow rather than too quick to replace individuals who cannot accommodate to the legitimate needs of the group.

It is much easier to "fix it" or "start it" than to "sustain it." Keeping a good organization tuned up, revitalized, and versatile year after year is the most difficult leadership challenge we have.

Our selection and promotion systems will continue to produce the current high rates of failure in leadership positions until we include in the evaluation process the systematic input from subordinates about leader behaviors. But this won't change soon because most of us in senior positions think the system that produced us is obviously working well. Succession planning is typically low on the priority list of the chairperson or CEO—even though we recognize that a poor executive team at the top can destroy in weeks a solid climate or even a culture that was years in the making.

Our search for the "balanced life" among active leaders will continue to be elusive—and maybe not worth the effort. Many people who have made

significant contributions to the world have been notoriously "unbalanced." While we must try to keep serious pathology away from positions of power, the reality is that few top performers are not somewhat "driven."

We don't spend enough time designing our systems to measure organizational efficiency and effectiveness. And we don't do much better in designing our individual performance assessment schemes—and the so-called pay-for-performance arrangements that emanate from them. Most organizations have never done a comprehensive scrub of their reports and measurements procedures, even though the total impact of the "how to succeed" equation has more influence on motivation and work prioritization than vision statements and value credos will ever have.

There is untapped, unexplored, underused talent at the bottom of every organization. Mining this lode is the only key to long-term enhanced productivity. That task is easy to envisage, hard to execute.

Expectations of future performance expressed by teachers, coaches, and executives have remarkable impact on results. This is especially true if we predict failure.

The natural state of things in organizations is a kind of rigid stupidity. If an organization is left unattended by the senior executive team for long—even if it is constituted by a workforce of good heart—it slides toward a dysfunctional climate.

Bosses—especially senior ones—overestimate the significance of their routine decision-making and underestimate the impact of their personal behavior. Exemplifying the desired leadership style and the positive values espoused in the company creed delivers power to others and sets the real managerial tone—and cannot be delegated to committees or consultants.

Except for these few items, I have no strong feelings about organizational leadership!

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A Shadow Definition

David Campbell has spent most of his adult life thinking about and studying creativity and leadership. With great ingenuity he has explored the individual interests, the characteristics and behaviors, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of leaders. His work as a scientist of international repute and his sparkle as a human being make him a powerful contributor to life at the Center.

For the last six years directly, and indirectly for twenty years prior, David has developed, honed, tested, revised, and experimented with measures and depictions of leadership. His description of the development of the Campbell Leadership Index™ (CLI®) reflects the vigorous work of a scientist. It also reflects the common sense of a savvy observer of humanity. The CLI has high potential for helping people understand themselves, helping bosses and subordinates understand each other, and helping organizations understand life in general.

In reading how the CLI was crafted, I find myself particularly interested in the conceptual and value issues that were raised in its production. David's definition of leadership is not to be taken lightly—"actions that focus resources to create desirable opportunities." Not bad. But there are questions. Do we have the right to impose a value component—such as "desirable"—in the definition of a generic function?

In my mind there are two possible justifications for excluding the Hitlers of the world from being described as having exercised "leadership." The first focuses on values. Even if we could agree with what was "desirable" in all times and circumstances, such an evaluation clouds the functional issue. Taking this approach, we might see Eisenhower's watercolors as "good artistship," while viewing Hitler's pastels as "bad artistship." Von Braun was a competent scientist when he worked at Peenemünde, Germany, just as he was at Huntsville, Alabama. But his brilliance in missile design at Peenemünde contributed to one of the least noble causes of our century. Somewhat reluctantly my conclusion is that the social or moral context of the performance should not be part of the rating of the performance itself. By my somewhat narrow definition, Hitler passes this part of the "leadership" test.

The second possible justification focuses on how we conceptualize "leadership." What if we define it as based primarily on personal influence and not the use of positional power? Gandhi at the start had no authority except that given him by followers. We might call that "pure leadership" (especially if the followers were motivated by other than threat or fear of *not* following). But because people who are in charge typically use what I see as

"direct leadership" skills (motivating, influencing, explaining, trusting, team-building, inspiring) in combination with what might be called "systems leadership" skills (building a positive climate through sensitive design of open communications, articulation of an organizational vision, and development of coherent, supportive policies), as well as traditional managerial practices (allocating resources, prioritizing tasks, designing work flow), we do not expect to see "pure" anything in most situations. Whether Hitler would pass this test of leadership would depend on which stage of his life we examined. Overall, although his personality surely had a charismatic component, his use of structured terror as a prime source of interpersonal influence would be sufficient to remove him from my list of effective leaders. (Of course he remains a significant historical figure—atrocious, but significant.)

As we struggle to develop a list of desirable behaviors or characteristics of leaders, the thought has crossed my mind that it might be helpful to come up with a short list of behaviors that are universally objectionable. I'm still not sure that there is any one formula for leadership that guarantees success, but I'm confident that the practice of the following behaviors will ensure leadership disaster:

1. Routinely put your own agenda above that of the organization.
2. Make conspicuous promises and then don't do your best to deliver on them.
3. Clearly show moral or physical cowardice during a crisis.
4. Never tell anybody what you really want him or her or the organization to do.

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Bad Lessons

Press reports in June 1991 indicated that firefighter Red Adair was frustrated. He couldn't seem to get things quickly organized and supported. His monumental efforts to blow out the fires and cap the wells that had been torched by the retreating Iraqi army were moving erratically amid various kinds of logistical, administrative, and political confusion. Red was quoted as saying that he needed a Norm Schwarzkopf to lead the attack, implying that Norm's obvious leadership ability would surely bring order out of chaos.

The problems in the Kuwaiti oil fields after the Gulf War were only one of the major problems that we, as members of the global village, witnessed in 1991. We literally watched macro geopolitical systems changing in quick time. It is not surprising, then, that people are turning to General Schwarzkopf as a model for leadership, given the success of the venture he led. My hunch is, however, that some of the lessons that are being drawn from his example, and perhaps from the example of other conspicuous military and political leaders of today, will be simplistic and incorrect.

In the case of Norm Schwarzkopf I can foresee at least two incorrect lessons.

One Incorrect Lesson. One lesson that might be drawn is that in challenging times a strong leader will suddenly come off the bench and by powerful personal example mold an efficient, effective organization—even if circumstances are fearsomely complex. This lesson says that it was Schwarzkopf's drive, vigor, decisiveness, and personal magnetism that was the key ingredient for the success of Operation Desert Storm.

A Better Analysis. There is no doubt that Norm Schwarzkopf splendidly represented the essence of the U.S. Army's professional values of Commitment, Competence, Candor, and Courage. But his most important contribution was not thirty days of high-profile decisiveness. It was his thirty years of learning, practicing, and developing; and the immediately prior thirty months of planning, team-building, and standard-setting that enhanced a culture, established systems, and developed the thousands of leaders whose competence and confidence were collectively responsible for the success of the operation. Without a strong existing culture, and a host of informed and motivated leaders at all levels, Norm probably would be the first to tell Red Adair that more than dynamic leadership at the top would be needed to put out those fires!

Another Incorrect Lesson. A second lesson that might be drawn from Operation Desert Storm is that to get the job done, decentralization and empowerment are the key: The Gulf War was characterized by Washington

keeping hands off and letting the field commander call the shots—the exact opposite of the micromanaged Vietnam War.

A Better Analysis. Yes, in contrast to Vietnam, where we had a President often selecting targets for individual aircraft to strike, the Gulf War was an example of the top headquarters focusing on basic strategy and gathering of resources while the responsible commander in the field executed the strategy without inappropriate meddling from those in remote, high-level positions. And it is often true that people in high places do meddle—because of a perceived need for immediate status reports, a compulsion to get into the action, or an inability to trust and delegate. But the idea of "hands off" after the mission is assigned is nonsensical. Any boss who articulates a goal and then stands back is asking for trouble. (The Iran-Contra affair is a classic case of such folly.) The issue is how and when to influence the operation once the subordinate echelon has been given its instructions and resources.

Most days in the Gulf War Norm Schwarzkopf and his boss Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had lengthy phone conversations. The commander in the field was probably given some guidance, had some questions answered, and made requests that were approved or denied or modified. The latitude given him notwithstanding, Norm Schwarzkopf operated routinely within two types of powerful guidelines: the value system of his profession (differentiating those actions that were proper from those that were improper), and the current macro political and resource realities as defined for him by his superiors.

A Basic Lesson. In summary, high-profile, decisive leadership is often appropriate but rarely by itself sufficient. Building the team and nourishing the culture over time is crucial. And although empowered and committed junior leaders are essential to organizational success, a laissez-faire style of leading can be as dysfunctional as can micromanagement.

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An Issue and an Observation

Consistent with the title of CCL's well-known publication, I would like to report on an *issue* that we at the Center have recently been struggling with and then make an *observation* about a trend I see in corporate society. I offer these basically as notes and will not attempt to tie the two together.

The *Issue* of Defining Leadership

We at the Center expend considerable energy thinking and writing about leadership. There is an amazing variety of approaches that one can take to the subject: To what degree are leaders "born," and to what degree "made"? What are the different kinds of leaders and how do these relate to different situations? How relevant are traits and characteristics to success in leadership? What are the best methods for gaining insights about one's strengths and weaknesses in leading? How does context affect leadership effectiveness, and vice versa? Are there sets of behaviors and characteristics that can predict an executive's promotability? Are there aspects of leadership that are culturally determined? Do organizations of different sizes and missions require different kinds of leaders? How, precisely, does a leader learn from experience? How can a leader continue to develop throughout his or her career? How does cognitive ability affect leadership effectiveness? What are the leadership issues involved in diversity—between the sexes, among races, and among age groups? Are public and private-sector leadership different? What role does authority play in the leadership equation? What are the ethical implications of exercising influence over others? How can leadership training be measured and evaluated?

Despite this range of questions, all currently under consideration at the Center, we have never constructed and adopted a single working definition of leadership. Now, however, in the twenty-second year of our history, we have begun an exploration of this perplexing issue. Virtually everyone in the Center has been invited to participate; a few of our colleagues outside the Center have already been asked to accompany us on this journey; and ideas on the subject from the readers of *Issues & Observations* are welcome.

We are finding this effort stimulating, sometimes even emotional. We encountered a challenge right at the outset, in the form of the question: Can leadership in fact be usefully defined? Also, some of us wondered whether a definition might not tie our hands, limit our options, foster rigidity, or appear presumptuous. Others of us were concerned that the lack of a working definition might suggest a shortage of initiative, integrity, conceptual ability, courage, or teamwork. Yet others had ideas somewhere in the middle.

Nevertheless, we resolved to continue our journey and try to come up with a definition—or perhaps definitions. Our efforts at present focus on exploring the concept of leadership—although we have considered other paths that would lead to definitions of "leaders," "effective leaders," "ethical leaders," and "creative leaders." We may still get to these. In any case, we are now hard at work with basic concepts, contrasting paradigms, probably some fondly held biases, uncomfortable new formulations, and clearly outrageous propositions. It remains a difficult journey. But I think everyone agrees now that it is one worth making.

An *Observation* About Quick-change, Quick-fix Leadership

In times of crisis—political, military, or commercial—we know it's not uncommon to reach out for new leadership. As they say, "When the going gets tough, get somebody tough to shape up the organization." The new person takes charge quickly, makes hard decisions immediately, throws out the deadwood, cuts red tape, flattens the organization (in more ways than one!), sells off a business or two, and fires a whole bunch of folks. Recently there have been several conspicuous examples of this in some prominent American corporations. Decisive outsiders have arrived to take charge with a style advertised as somewhat more draconian than nurturing.

Instances of the spectacular displacement of top leadership probably will be with us forever. Certainly, the Center's studies confirm that the derailment of executives is an all-too-common occurrence. Yet the recently advertised episodes, wherein major corporate leadership is cast aside and replaced with heavy-handed quick-fixers, deserve serious review. In any such review I believe that we will raise some familiar questions: Can't we select and develop senior leaders with the ability to stay in touch with both internal and external realities—including those almost silent incremental changes that accumulate and suddenly explode to destroy the status quo? Can't a top executive retain options for making significant organizational changes, if events warrant, while still adhering to principles of leadership that build truly effective, cohesive, learning organizations over time?

One possible answer to these questions, of course, is "no." Perhaps even our best people in top positions cannot control or influence or anticipate sufficiently to prevent organizational disasters. Maybe sudden changes at the helm are an inherent part of business life. But if we were smarter . . . maybe not!

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Assessment

Efforts to study leadership have always been plagued with the "criterion" problem: What defines leadership? Neither the business nor the academic community has ever been able to agree on a definition. And even if one were agreed upon today, circumstances and social evolution would probably make it less useful tomorrow.

Without a definition, it is very difficult to measure leadership—to objectively evaluate its success or failure. At the Center, most of our discussions of the success and failure of leaders are based on an organizationally derived definition of "success" and "failure," and these may or may not be a reflection of actual leadership effectiveness, and may or may not be generalizable outside the organizational cultures from which the data were collected.

The challenge of defining and measuring leadership is inherent in all of the Center's work. Perhaps in the midst of our concern for developing evaluative criteria regarding leadership—or, more precisely, our concern about criteria for leader effectiveness in a particular situation—we have neglected a potentially valuable tool. This particular tool stems from assessment-center technology.

Assessment centers in American business life have their origins in World War II. In 1942 the Army's Office of Strategic Services started screening candidates for a variety of wartime intelligence assignments (see *Assessment of Men*, New York: Holt Rinehart, 1948). A number of subsequent research, selection, and development techniques, such as those at AT&T, were derived from the OSS assessment operation. Often, assessment-center exercises, regardless of whether they were seen as reliable in predicting success of the candidates or in providing developmental feedback to them, have been regarded as highly rewarding and worthwhile by those doing the assessing. In the course of making assessments, both line managers and human resources professionals have been able to refine their criteria for "success" in the organization, and have discovered or reconfirmed the daunting complexities involved in appraising performance.

There are few, if any, training programs designed to enhance the ability of managers to assess the leadership effectiveness of their subordinates or colleagues. Measuring both individual and organizational productivity, much less the more elusive "efficiency," continues to be more of an art than a science—despite claims to the contrary. Organizations tend to assume that their evaluations of both process and output are based on solid ground. In fact, our criteria for "productivity" in white-collar work are ill-defined, even

as they constitute the formal basis for most of our personnel actions—including promotion.

We need to harness the power of the assessment center as a tool for training managers and executives in certain aspects of the art of judging performance. I would advocate a policy wherein all promising line managers should participate—after appropriate training—as staff in assessment-center operations and should serve periodically in this delicate and demanding activity. Such an organizational policy would help ensure that we give performance evaluation the kind of conceptual and practical attention it deserves. The reality is that the crucial process of evaluating the effectiveness of managers on the job remains woefully understudied even as we recognize increasingly the importance of managerial work as a key ingredient in the productivity equation.

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Questions of Change

The very idea of change is threatening. Everything biological and historical argues against our embracing something different. It took people a long time to come to grips with the round earth and the heliocentric motions of the local planets—even though these conceptual revisions hardly affected the life of the typical fifteenth-century worker.

Projecting, thinking about, and reacting to changes in technological and societal circumstances has become a hallmark of our times. "White water forever" is the rallying cry of many who study and write about future organizational environments. Given the convincing arguments that change is inevitable on most fronts, that it is necessary if we are to grow and learn and improve, and that there is no escaping it, it would seem to follow that we leaders of organizations would need no further urging to confront "change." But that doesn't seem to be the case.

Advice about the necessity for growth and change might be more palatable if it were presented indirectly. Perhaps we could craft some questions for leaders of large, complex organizations—especially those organizations with relatively strong cultures and a recent record of success—that wouldn't get the defensive juices flowing. (Relatively robust, successful, and confident organizations may well be the most likely to experience incremental, unobtrusive deterioration.)

Maybe we could instigate organizational introspection with some of the following questions, hoping they would be a catalyst for opening a wider discussion about the perils of satisfaction with the status quo:

Is there an even more reliable and motivational method of evaluating individual and group productivity within your company than the innovative systems you are now using? (In fact, all too few systems are in harmony with company values and priorities; and outmoded performance-appraisal methods that encourage competitiveness instead of cooperation are endemic to contemporary American organizations.)

Can you enhance your in-place programs for reallocating authority and responsibility within your organization so that you further optimize the contributions of everybody in the workforce? (The control-versus-commitment paradigm which is at the heart of total quality management and other highly visible movements represents the single biggest challenge to true implementation of "quality" programs. Generating the mutual trust and respect between organizational layers and among departments requires more creativity, more personal risk-taking, and greater change from a comfortable hierarchical managerial orientation than most of us are willing to give.)

Does your system of selecting the right people for promotion—as good as it is—do everything it should for your organization? (The high percentage of managers who are promoted and then are seen to fail should be viewed as a national disgrace. Something is missing, including reliable definitions of "success" and "failure." Evaluation of candidates from multiple perspectives—not just from the perspective of the boss—might be a powerful part of the solution. Opportunities for monitored development on the job after structured feedback should help. But the true criteria for promotion remain unclear in almost all organizations.)

Can you improve your procedures for studying and analyzing your frequent successes and occasional failures so that your organization can learn even more quickly from its collective experience? (Case studies in the business-school format might be too elaborate or too simplistic, and mostly they are very late on the scene. We are uncomfortable revealing what really happened, to include the bad decisions of our bosses, in a systematic and useful form. Discussions in the board room and around the CEO's table rarely have the collection of facts and frustrations needed to isolate systemic defects and to promote constructive learning from success and failure.)

I doubt if some recent campaign organizations would have found these questions useful. If there is leadership at the top that operates independently of inputs from peers and subordinates, posing these questions would be a waste of time. Of course it is true that if the top person has access to all the data, possesses the requisite cognitive ability, has the full range of pertinent experience, and retains a completely robust personality, these questions would be impertinent and irrelevant. But there are such a very few of us around . . .

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Comparing Military and Business Leaders

I am sometimes asked about my view of the difference between leadership in the military and leadership in the business world. There are, of course, many similarities. The manuals describing the desired traits and behaviors of the American military leader cite attributes that appear to be universally prized: attention to the mission, caring for subordinates, making the intent of the commander clear, moral and physical courage, and willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the larger community.

The challenges faced by military or business leaders become more similar the higher one moves up the organizational ladder. Americans who become leaders in either area typically have similar value systems regarding the larger issues of life. (This is more believable for those of us who have had the opportunity to observe both arenas closely.) Yet there are differences:

Army officers spend at least twice as much time in classrooms over their careers as do their civilian equivalents. One of the significantly different background characteristics between Army brigadier generals and their corporate counterparts is that ninety-five percent of the generals have a master's or higher degree, whereas about thirty-five percent of the corporate leaders have attained that level of formal education.

Most of the differences in style or methods of leadership can be related to differences in the cultures. The basis of the military culture is the oath taken that puts mission accomplishment above life itself. The expectation of personal sacrifice is key. Fundamental allegiance is neither to boss nor to unit but to the Constitution of the United States. The assumption regarding personal sacrifice—be it time and energy in peacetime or life and limb in combat—does put a different light on things. It encourages a strong conservatism that can manifest itself as suspicion of change on one hand, while nourishing risk and adventure on the other. (The warrior ethos, which is critical to the professional soldier, needs to be contained and focused or it becomes dysfunctional as a peacetime modus operandi.)

The culture of the military continues to place even more emphasis on personal character than on personal expertise. Trustworthiness, of course, remains the essential medium in any leadership situation. It is more greatly prized under the extraordinarily demanding circumstances typical of the operational military environment. Although military organizations have experienced the same leap in complexity as the rest of our world, with technical competence obviously a contemporary requirement, the bedrock of a soldier's professional reputation is "character."

The military cannot practice its business in context except on the battlefield. All peacetime activities are in part a simulation. During training, military surgeons and computer operators and truck drivers perform tasks similar to those in wartime. Still, without the terrible realities of battle even the most arduous of training exercises cannot replicate the pace and stress of combat. As a corollary to this situation, accurately evaluating the effectiveness of a military unit presents a formidable challenge. (There is almost the same level of complexity and ambiguity in evaluating corporate productivity—although this fact is too rarely recognized.)

There is only one military in our nation. You are either in or out. There are no lateral transfers to another military. In other words, the "company" is also the entire profession! Although assignments may have a great range of diversity (for instance, from doing behavioral science research, to developing a new aircraft, to procuring repair parts, to commanding a submarine), these are all played out in the same basic culture.

All leaders in the military are promoted from within—with almost no exceptions. Every general has been a second lieutenant. Promotions up through the grade of major general are normally made without reference to a specific position to be filled. Promotion decisions are centralized. A board of officers assembles in Washington and votes from extensive files on each of the eligibles. Only at the three- and four-star level are officers routinely selected and promoted to fill a particular vacancy.

Living within the military culture bonds people together. Such things as sharing hardships over the years in strange and often inhospitable places, being on call twenty-four hours a day, and all too frequently flying away in the dead of night for an undetermined stay creates enduring ties. Strong teams and strong feelings develop. This cohesion—essential, a source of satisfaction and comfort, and a wonderful catalyst for teamwork—is also recognized as a potential hindrance to requisite individual and organizational growth, change, and adaptation.

In sum, leadership in the military *is* different. (There are obviously some situations of dramatically different context.) But the differences are rarely fundamental, and are easily overstated. Whether in business or in the military, people rise to positions of high responsibility basically through the long-term demonstration of those skills and behaviors essential to organizational productivity and in harmony with the culture. Good leaders and good cultures have a remarkable similarity across the broad range of organizations within American society.

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The Need to Build, as Well as Operate, Organizations

One of the few real differences between Japanese and American executives is the immediacy with which the latter demand measurable results. Americans are indeed guilty of focusing on the short term. And there may be more to it than Wall Street's appetite for quarterly returns. The drive and impatience of the typical American executive may be as much a reflection of inadequate concepts of leadership theory as of any inherent personality traits.

I think we have a significant flaw in much of the recent literature and training on leadership. That flaw is the failure to distinguish between two fundamental dimensions of organizational leadership: "operating" and "building." In the former, the leader is concerned with making the organization as efficient and immediately productive as it can be; in the latter, the leader is concerned with the continuing capacity of the organization to be efficient and productive.

Even within the military—whose overall leadership effectiveness is in my view second to none—there is a frequent reliance on "operating" techniques (for instance, heavy control—something well suited to combat environments where prompt response is crucial) in situations where "building" techniques are most appropriate (for instance, in deciding how best to use a new simulation).

Some of this misapplication of technique derives from leadership training that has inadvertently neglected long-term issues. The measurable short term has achieved its preeminence somewhat by default. For instance, consider leadership as it is put into the basic Ohio State formula, where "mission" and "people" are the two variables. How is the long term introduced into this convenient formula? What if there were a third variable of almost equal weight. This third variable could be called "context" or "purpose" (or maybe something more striking that does not immediately come to mind!). In any case, this third variable would have two major subdivisions: "building" and "operating." Given this expanded paradigm of basic leadership, we might be less likely to take those actions that produce only profits for the next quarter instead of those less immediately spectacular measures that could lead to an improved next decade.

It is true that we have recognized for many years that leaders must consider the situation or context, the resources available, and the mission at hand before selecting a particular modus operandi. We have recognized also that certain leader behaviors are appropriate regardless of the situation—such as actions that generate perceptions of competence, fairness, predictability, and integrity. But for some reason the simple idea of distinguishing between

the institutional development, or sustainment, mode ("building") and the conduct of business, or tactical, mode ("operating") when discussing optimum leadership and managerial techniques has not been popular. Granted, an intermixing of these techniques always pertains. Still, an awareness of the conspicuous difference in their impact could lead to ameliorating many of the frustrations that commonly plague both leader and follower.

It is ironic that the striking increase in leadership training that we have witnessed in recent years may have contributed to a serious leadership problem because the primary focus has been de facto on the short term.

In any event, distinguishing between "building" and "operating" would not substitute for theories of transformational leadership or situational leadership. But it would augment such constructions. Perhaps this distinction, when added to the formula for leadership action in the minds of American executives, will bring us a step closer to gaining the long-term productivity that our society so badly needs.

As a final word, I should say that I am not claiming to have invented this distinction between short- and long-term techniques. Like most leadership ideas it has been around for a long time. For instance, many of the "new principles" of leadership have been in military textbooks for decades, both here and abroad. There are wonderful discussions of empowerment, of struggles with ambiguity, of the sometimes fatal consequences of lack of self-awareness, and of the need for continuing development and growth in a book entitled *The Power of Personality in War* by Major General Freytag-Loringhoven, published in 1905. And of course Nelson's preparations of shared vision and mutual trust and confidence among his captains before his victory at Trafalgar in 1805 met every aspect of contemporary guidance to CEOs of the 1990s. Perhaps the development of good leaders has less to do with what we don't know than with what we have forgotten!

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More Learning

Here are some more lessons I learned during my tenure as president and CEO of CCL.

The personality of the leader is a powerful factor in the leadership equation. Let me illustrate this with an example from history. Napoleon came to the battle of Waterloo with an ego fed by innumerable successes. His charismatic leadership had enabled him, after his escape from Elba, to create an army that threatened to reconfigure the map of Europe. But at a breakfast with his marshals before the battle, his arrogance set the stage for a monumental defeat. He angrily dismissed criticisms of his plan of attack. A prisoner of past triumphs, unwilling to listen to his trusted and battle-tested staff, he launched a fatally flawed attack. Even today, one hundred eighty years later, "Waterloo" is synonymous with "defeat."

If Napoleon had attended a training workshop similar to our "Leadership Development Program," his story (and history) might have been different! Powerful personalities need the ameliorating impact of self-awareness. The key to self-knowledge is the ability to accept and act on feedback. The dilemma in this is that the more "successful" we become—especially in classical, hierarchical organizations—the more unlikely it is that we will receive useful feedback and thereby come to grips with our strengths and weaknesses.

All of us at the Center believe that leadership effectiveness can be enhanced through a combination of relevant education, meaningful experience on the job, and coaching. The "hard wiring" that comes from genetics and early childhood environments, and which leads to the strength of personality required for sustained, effective leadership, is still somewhat malleable. Any emphasis on managerial skill development must be balanced with an emphasis on the development of self-awareness.

The distinction between short- and long-term impacts should be a primary concern as we examine leadership effectiveness. Most of us remember when the chemical DDT was seen as a godsend. In 1955 it was accepted as an effective, efficient destroyer of bad bugs. No one seemed aware of its long-term effects. Only later did we recognize its widespread, incremental damage to the ecosphere.

In a perfect world we should receive two report cards on the effectiveness of our leadership. The initial report would cover our immediate and clearly visible impact on the organization—such as quarterly profits or numbers of publications or sick-leave utilization. The second report would come a decade or so later. It would evaluate our contribution to the long-term health of the

institution, the characteristics of the retained workforce, the outcomes of research-and-development programs, and the corporate ethical standards that emerged from our earlier efforts.

Unfortunately, in the imperfect real world, the ink is usually still wet on our performance appraisal when somebody has to make a "personnel decision" about our future. There is not the luxury of waiting for a second report. However, we can rethink the criteria for assessment that go into the first. Redefining or broadening evaluative criteria to reflect long-term impacts ("This person saved a million dollars this year by not buying new tires for the forklifts, but in three years it will cost $10 million to replace forklift bearings damaged by running on gouged tires") is essential. As a part of the process of redefinition, we need to include in our basic leadership models a distinction between the immediate task of getting the work done efficiently and the long-term task of institutional sustainment. (This is the difference between the "operating" role and the "building" role in leadership that I discussed earlier.)

Organizational measurement systems are the links between vision and reality. An insurance company I know of recently wondered why there was little exchange of potential client lists and not much collaboration among members of its sales staff, even though the CEO had papered the walls with "teamwork is us" posters. From the outside, the answer was obvious: Salaries were based exclusively on how many policies each individual sold. There was no material reward for teamwork.

Despite their importance—in the example above and as they affect climate and culture—organizational measurement systems are little appreciated and rarely studied. There are few articles on measuring organizational output, and not much useful discussion of the relationship between performance appraisal systems and organizational change. This situation needs help.

To succeed, leaders must be in harmony with their context. I believe it was the 1936 DeSoto that had such a distinctly futuristic design, with delightful curves that made it so aerodynamically efficient. And the Tucker was also a good car. Both failed, however, because they were out of sync with their times. Even good products can fail if the time is not right. The Winston Churchill of 1946 was little different from the Winston Churchill of 1941, but in 1945 he lost an election—after winning a war. And Henry Ford's style would get him fired today—in most places.

Being in harmony with context does not, of course, guarantee leadership success. Failure can happen at any time. In fact, failure can be guaranteed if the leader does not follow up on promises, is unclear about goals and

priorities, shows a lack of courage in the face of pressure, or is conspicuously unfair in dealing with other people.

Learning must be multidimensional. Leaders must not only open themselves up to new constructs (such as organizational reconfiguration) and ways of thinking (such as global competitiveness), they must also continue to acquire new, often small, specific skills (such as manipulating E-mail and spreadsheets on a computer terminal). And they must "learn to learn," overcoming the tendency to avoid failure by only working with tried-and-true skills in familiar areas. If this is done, learning can drive development.

These are some of the things that I have learned in my time in this organization. Acquiring them has been a meaningful experience for me. I hope that this period has also been meaningful to others whose lives have been touched by the Center.

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Lessons from the Battlefield

The stories of commitment and courage amid the chaos and terror of D-Day seem at least as relevant today as they were in 1944. Of course that comes as no surprise. War, in all of its horror, is a powerful laboratory. Whether we ever learn any of the resultant lessons remains an open question.

During my years at the Center I have spent moments now and then thinking about the fundamental difference between life as a soldier and life as a civilian. I have concluded that there is only one. Television and newspaper stories over past weeks describing landings on and behind the Normandy beaches clearly describe that difference. Soldiers are expected to die if necessary to accomplish the task at hand. Civilian commitment to the organizational mission is, appropriately, less complete.

It is remarkable given the trends toward individualism and self-satisfaction our society has taken over the past fifty years that concepts of basically idealistic, selfless service have survived. It is a tribute to something in our deeper culture that is not easily describable. I was reminded of this a couple weeks ago in a conversation with a colleague whose family does not have a tradition of service in the military. One of his sons serves in the Navy, and his shipboard duty station is below deck—well below the water line. He was describing to his father his duties in case the ship were hit by a mine or missile in his aft compartment. He said, "My job then is to quickly seal this compartment by closing the watertight hatch between us and the rest of the ship. I'd be inside and would have to go down with the ship." Then his Dad said, "Well how do you feel about that!" And his twenty-year-old, a product of our materialistic and self-serving culture, replied, "That's okay. It's my job to save the ship."

So, back to June 1944. It seems that there was a B-24 bomber named UMBRIAGO by its ten-man crew. The name was painted proudly on the nose, each crewman having chipped in five dollars to get the handiwork done right by some entrepreneur at an airbase in England. Our Greensboro, North Carolina, newspaper recently carried a story of the fiftieth reunion of this crew, which had flown fifty missions together under some perilous circumstances. All eight surviving members got together. Two interesting incidents of their days together in 1944 were included in the story. These stories were rich with leadership and commitment. In particular, they told of the leadership role of Jim, the host of the reunion, now wheelchair-bound. He was the waist gunner and assistant engineer. Returning from a mission, the pilot and commander (an old man of twenty years) announced that given the damage to the plane the crew had the option of jumping or staying. Jim said, "What are you

going to do?" The pilot had replied, "I'm going to try and land this thing." And Jim said, speaking for the crew—at least three of whom were senior to him in rank—"Then we'll all ride it down with you." On a later flight over Germany a senior commander had evidently given orders that on this particular mission the bombers could turn back if they saw enemy fighters. When one of the UMBRIAGO's crew said he thought he saw enemy fighters and perhaps was thinking about making a case for turning back before reaching their target, the moral leader once again came up on the intercom: "He said if we *saw* German fighters we could turn back: He didn't say if we *thought* we saw German fighters we could. We can't turn back just because somebody *thinks* they see them!" And they didn't turn back. Pure leadership, I say, does not rely on positional authority. However, most leadership taking place in organizations is entwined with the authority derived from organizational position. The optimal situation—which is what I suspect existed within this crew—is that both sources of authority, moral and positional, come into play in just the right mix.

During the first twelve hours on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944 our Army took more casualties than it did in any twelve months of the Vietnam War. We have seen more clearly this year than we did fifty years ago how weather, human error, and German fortitude combined to turn Omaha Beach into a horrible killing zone. But what happened in the face of this was truly a decentralized, empowered event. There were instances of generals and colonels taking a heroic initiative here and there. For the most part, however, the beach assault was an unorganized mass of intermixed units with little or no functioning chain of command. Something took charge. Individuals moved forward, took initiative, took risks, and displayed awesome courage. Ad hoc teams formed on the beaches, and in fields and woods inland, where paratroopers had been scattered over the landscape miles away from their planned drop zones. A friend of mine, then a captain, landed way off course. He collected a dozen soldiers who had parachuted into the same area. This newly formed team had been without sleep for more than forty-eight hours, and during that time they were subjected to extreme physical and mental stress. In single file alongside a road, they heard a large formation of German infantry approaching in the twilight. The captain signaled to lie down and take cover, hoping to avoid detection. Thinking they might have to fight right there if discovered, he pulled the safety pin from a grenade and held the grenade in his hand, his arm cocked to throw, as he lay down. Many minutes later, he woke—with the grenade still clutched in his hand with the pin out! He and every member of his team were so exhausted that they fell instantly to sleep when they hit the dirt! Awakening, they resumed their mission and were

among those causing terror and confusion to the enemy until linkup with the troops that had come ashore across the beaches.

Here we see initiative, persistence, commitment—from a group of people, ninety percent of whom had been relatively carefree civilians just two and three years before. The catalyst for such a remarkable performance must have been the shared value of a mission that was seen as worthy of sacrifice. Leaders must have been instrumental in building that commitment. The "building" phase of leading might have been even more critical to tactical success than was the leadership in the crucial "operating" period.

Business is not war. I object to military terminology being used in the corporate context. It trivializes the military vocabulary and debases the conduct of business. That said, obviously there remain lessons from the battlefield that are useful in leadership within the nonmilitary world. It is tempting to say that behaviors of prompt decision-making or stern admonishment or overwhelming charisma are the key lessons. But we know it is more sophisticated. Building essential informed commitment to the organization, a commitment that can sustain creative independent action, is the secret ingredient and the true legacy of great leaders.

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Good and Bad Questions

People have been arguing about the fundamental issues of "life" for quite some time and they will most likely continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Similarly, and on only a slightly lower level of human concern, people are debating the fundamental issues of "leadership." Some of these debates seem useful to me. Others do not. Here is my assessment:

Is leadership different from management? Trying to make a distinction between leadership and management is ultimately a useless exercise. True, leadership primarily involves vision, motivation, and commitment; and management primarily involves resources, structures, and prioritization. But these concepts are so entwined operationally—so interdependent in reality—that the argument has little utility.

Are leaders born or made? This question has some merit. A thoughtful analysis of what leaders do and what competencies and behaviors they must possess is essential for a productive discussion about leadership. Once those are determined for a particular situation—keeping in mind that optimal competencies and behaviors can be universal (i.e., trustworthy) or situational (i.e., personable)—there can be a useful dialogue. Which of the competencies are inborn? Which of the behaviors are learned? And, most importantly, which competencies and behaviors are amenable to change or enhancement, and by what combination of mechanisms?

Can work and other life be balanced? I put this in the nonproductive category. Concepts about a "balanced" life are highly theoretical. It could be argued that most of the substantial contributions to civilization have been made by "unbalanced" people. More importantly, "balanced" is in the eye of the beholder. (But I guess some awareness of the issue can't hurt!)

Should you work to improve yourself or to improve the world? This is a keeper. If a leader, such as Napoleon prior to Waterloo, has not accepted the need to listen, learn, and grow, his or her potential will not be reached—and any world-changing power will be impeded. Improving one's self-awareness is for most of us a tough pill to swallow (the pill size varies directly with the degree of previously attained "success").

Is success internally or externally defined? This question is a winner. It is missing in most studies concerning executive success. Yet it is a profoundly practical question. Arriving at a clear definition of success can clarify, revitalize, frighten, or embolden. (And on a larger scale it can do the same for organizations of every shape and size.) The fact that success is derived from both internal constructs and external realities only enhances the value of the question.

Should the primary culture of an organization be autocratic or democratic? The persistent tension between individual and group decision-making—in every kind of organization from the Catholic Church to General Motors—attests to the relevance of this question. Those of us who believe that leaders in organizations must have authority commensurate with their responsibility can be accused of insensitivity to the tendency to abuse power. Yet, because of the stakes involved, the debate must take place and no issue is more important for contemporary organizations. Everybody knows that "empowered" organizations in our culture are more productive over the long run than highly "controlled" ones. But almost everybody also knows that even people with good intentions do not automatically blend into high-performing teams when there are no clear guidelines to focus and harmonize efforts.

Is selection more important than development? This question exemplifies how a theoretical discussion can illuminate fundamental issues. When we confront the question of whether our processes for selecting the "right" people are key to a successful organization, or explore whether our programs to train and develop all available talent represent the crucial practice, the sensible conclusion that it is "both" makes this argument ultimately productive.

What is more important, context or personality? This potentially productive question is awfully complex. It is not for brief hallway conversations. Of course the situational context matters—although I am coming to think that "time" is the only important situational variable. Of course "personality" matters—in fact, more than most of us are willing to admit. Our "hard wiring" and early nurturing can exert relentless pressure on us to behave in certain ways regardless of the context in which we find ourselves.

Some closing words. This is my final "Inside View." I have often said that I have been very fortunate to have spent over forty-two years working in two remarkable organizations: the U.S. Army and the Center for Creative Leadership. I found a surprising similarity of values regarding service to society in these organizations: good people working for something larger than themselves. What a joy and privilege to have been a part of their history!

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With thirty-seven years in the U.S. Army, retiring as a three-star general, and nine years as the president and CEO of the Center for Creative Leadership, Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., has a wealth of leadership experience. He is also an exceptionally thoughtful person committed to learning from his experience. This book, selected from columns that he wrote for CCL's periodical *Issues & Observations* and introduced by an adaptation of an essay written for the Kellogg Leadership Studies Project, demonstrates his understanding of both practice and theory, and reminds us that there can be no true leadership without learning.

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